
THE PEACEMAKER AS “OTHER” IN A COARSENEED CULTURE OF FEAR

Jennifer McCloud
Transylvania University

Angela Hurley
Transylvania University

One week after a student shot and killed seventeen people at Stoneman Douglass High School, President Trump said: “We have to harden our schools, not soften them.”¹ In the following days, the Trump Administration ratcheted up the hardening rhetoric by suggesting arming school teachers.

If a potential “sicko shooter” knows that a school has a large number of very weapons talented teachers (and others) who will be instantly shooting, the sicko will NEVER attack that school. Cowards won’t go there . . . problem solved. Must be offensive, defense alone won’t work.²

National Rifle Association (NRA) CEO Wayne LaPierre echoed Trump: “Evil walks among us and God help us if we don’t harden our schools and protect our kids.”³ LePierre offered school districts free, “immediate, and professional consultation” from NRA’s School Shield Program.⁴ Created after the Sandy Hook school shootings, School Shield offers “vulnerability assessments” for schools and has provided over \$600,000 in fifty-four grants to public and private schools in twenty-three states.⁵ Funds provide “infrastructure

¹ John Wagner and Jenna Johnson, “‘We Have to Harden our Schools’: Trump Makes Arming Teachers His Top Safety Goal,” *The Washington Post*, February 22, 2018, <http://washingtonpost.com/politics/we-have-to-harden-our-schools-trump-says-teachers-should-be-armed-after-florida-massacre/2018/02/22/e8dcd5bc-17f6>.

² Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump), Twitter, February 22, 2018, <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/966660169194229761?lang=en>.

³ Joseph Milord, “Donald Trump’s Tweets About School Shootings and the NRA Are Something,” *The Elite Daily*, February 22, 2018, <https://www.elitedaily.com/p/donald-trumps-tweets-about-school-shootings-the-nra-are-something-8297148>.

⁴ Mike Dekkak, “NRA CEO Calls for the Hardening of Schools, Offers NRA’s Free Consultation to Any School District That Wants It,” *ITN: In The News*, February 22, 2018, <http://itnshow.com/2018/02/22/nra-ceo-calls-for-the-hardening-of-schools-offers-nras-free-consultation-to-any-school-district-that-wants-it/>.

⁵ Jennifer Harper, “NRA ‘School Shield’ Program Awards \$600K in Grants for School Security Projects,” *The Washington Times*, September 10, 2018, <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/sep/10/nra-school-shield-program-awards-600000-in-grants/>.

enhancement,” visitor management systems, security cameras and communications systems, tinting for windows, fencing, and “life-saving training.”⁶ The NRA is not the only organization to provide consultation. In the last two decades security firms have extended their services to schools, turning into a multi-billion-dollar industry.⁷ CHB Industries is one such firm. Identifying doorways and windows as “weak points,” CHB suggests tips for hardening them: “Reinforced entry doors and ground-level window glass are effective in slowing forced entry. Hardening upper-level windows can secure building occupants against glass-shrapnel injury in the event of a blast from a small nearby bomb.”⁸ In 2017 the public and private education sector spent 2.7 billion dollars on services and equipment, including cameras, metal detectors, bullet-proof glass, reinforced doors and even bullet-proof clipboards and backpacks.⁹

Despite little oversight and scant evidence that such measures work, school hardening shapes the narrative of how school violence is conceived.¹⁰ A hallmark of the current era is a culture of fear, surveillance, and control. The fear of school violence drives “defensive” schooling policies, and it is not unlike the fear that currently supports aggressive foreign policies that sanction drone strikes and the incarceration of suspected terrorists. However, the current measures taken for defense against terrorism are not working, and the same types of “warlike” measures will not make schools safer places either. Peace advocates such as Betty Reardon, Paul K. Chappell, and Gene Sharp advise that the way to defuse terrorism and other hostile aggressors is to look to the systemic problems that exacerbate the differences between groups and individuals and to take measures to attend to those problems. Pedro Noguera has similarly argued that politicians, schools, and the public ask the wrong questions about school violence.¹¹ They then turn to wrong solutions under the influence of the coarsening/hardening narrative. Noguera asserts that crime statistics, metal detectors, cameras, and even principals “carrying baseball bats” in the hall—now possibly replaced with principals carrying guns—which is a sign of the increased militarization of the get-tough narrative, are *symbols* that

⁶ Harper, “NRA ‘School Shield’ Program.”

⁷ Tiffany Hsu, “Threat of Shootings Turns School Security into a Growth Industry,” *The New York Times*, March 4, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/04/business/school-security-industry-surges-after-shootings.html>.

⁸ Daniel Venet, “How to Prevent Attacks and Minimize Damage: Key Steps to Hardening Your School,” *District Administration*, July 2, 2018, <https://districtadministration.com/how-schools-can-prevent-attacks-and-minimize-damage/>.

⁹ Hsu, “Threat of Shootings Turns School Security.”

¹⁰ Hsu, “Threat of Shootings Turns School Security.”

¹¹ Pedro Noguera, “Preventing and Producing Violence: A Critical Analysis of Responses to School Violence,” *Harvard Educational Review* 65, no. 2 (1995): 189–212.

schools prevent and manage school violence, but with little real impact on solving the problem. Noguera writes:

Within the context of the fight against violence, symbols . . . take on great significance, although they have little bearing upon how people actually feel about the occurrence of violence. . . . Metal detectors, barbed wire fences, armed guards and policemen, and principals wielding baseball bats as they patrol the halls are all symbols of tough action. And while most students that I have spoken to during my visits to schools realize that a student who wants to bring a weapon to school can get it into a building without being discovered by a metal detector, or that it is highly unlikely that any principal will hit a student with a baseball bat, the symbols persist, masking the truth that those responsible for school safety really don't have a clue about what to do to stem the tide of violence.¹²

Noguera suggests that rather than myopically looking to “increased security or improved technology,”¹³ schools should interrogate their history as sites of social control as a first school “vulnerability assessment.” Instead, schools turn to private security consultant firms for vulnerability assessments. They double down on the hardening narrative, grasping for all of the symbols that represent schools as safe spaces.

Though concrete symbols of school security have done little to actually prevent school violence, symbols cannot be underestimated. Susanne Langer's work on symbols illustrates that words and symbols produce their own reality and values, framing the questions/problems and solutions which bind us to view phenomena through a particular vantage point.¹⁴ When symbols reflect those of aggression and war—“hardening,” reinforced windows, metal detectors, armed teachers—schools are reproduced in that image. When the aggressive narrative of hardening becomes repeated enough, and is reinforced through economic/political systems, it becomes the only way.

Voices that counter the hardening narrative, then, often find themselves Othered, even when they speak from authority as those that have experienced school violence or experience the oppressive control in already hardened schools. Alex King, a high school senior in Chicago who helped organize the March for Our Lives rally with Douglas Stoneman survivors among others, speaks out against the hardening narrative. King describes how racism intersects with school hardening policies and has dehumanizing consequences:

¹² Noguera, 193.

¹³ Noguera, 193.

¹⁴ See Susanne K. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1941).

Trust me, where I’m from schools are already harder than you could imagine. We get up extra early every day to allow time to wait in line for the metal detectors. We’re disproportionately affected by zero-tolerance policies that funnel us into the school-to-prison pipeline. We already see armed officers walking the halls and if you don’t understand why that alone can cause us stress, then you haven’t learned about the treatment of Laquan McDonald or Tamir Rice or Sandra Bland or Stephon Clark. You should. As a proposed solution to mass shootings in schools, elected leaders want us to walk into classrooms where teachers carry loaded weapons? I challenge you to sit and learn about the history of civil rights with a clear mind while there are guns in your classroom.¹⁵

Yet students like King and Parkland students are often Othered for their positions. When students spoke out against the Trump Administration’s calls for arming teachers and demanded that politicians critique the NRA, Ted Nugent, NRA Board Member, disparaged the youth, calling them “mushy-brained,” and “liars.”¹⁶ Nugent reacted to Parkland student Emma Gonzalez’s reference to NRA political contributions as “blood money”:

The level of ignorance goes beyond stupidity. Again, the National Rifle Association are a bunch of American families who have a voice to stand up for our God-given Constitutionally-guaranteed right to keep and bear arms.¹⁷ We have no blood on our hands. . . . The National Rifle Association is the lone organization that has taught firearm safety in schools . . . So once again, this poor pathetic individual is a liar. . . . All you have to do now is not only feel sorry for the liars, but you have to go against them and pray to God that the lies can be crushed and the liars can be

¹⁵ Alex King, “Why Hardening” Schools Won’t Stop Violence and School Shootings,” *Teen Vogue*, April 2, 2018, <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/why-hardening-schools-wont-stop-violence-and-school-shootings>.

¹⁶ German Lopez, “NRA Board Member Ted Nugent: Parkland Survivors ‘Have No Soul,’” *Vox*, April 1, 2018, <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/4/1/17185746/ted-nugent-parkland-shooting-survivors-nra>.

¹⁷ Nugent’s evoking of American assumes Whiteness. Much was made of Gonzalez’s Cuban heritage. Talk show personalities and politicians (e.g., Laura Ingraham and Representative Steve King) used racially coded language to Other her. They questioned her very “Americanness” due to her gun control position AND ethnicity.

silenced so that real measures can be put into place to actually save children's lives.¹⁸

He concluded: "the evidence is irrefutable, [these children] have no soul."¹⁹ As a board member Nugent has power in shaping the hardening narrative, symbolically and through policy. He has the power to "Other" those that reject these symbols and solutions.

The hardening narrative reemerges after every violent tragedy, which occur all too frequently. In fall 2018, two white nationalists executed shootings: one murdered two African Americans at a Kroger in Kentucky; another murdered eleven Jewish congregants in a synagogue in Pennsylvania. The explanation for the November shooting that killed twelve in a bar in California is unknown. In the swirl of explanations, hardening proponents warn that what can happen in a grocery store, place of worship, or bar today, can be a school tomorrow. The "if it can happen here, it can happen anywhere" trope reinforces the hardening narrative and stokes a culture of fear. Rather than serving as the clarion call to name the proliferation of guns, white nationalism, social isolation, and hatred of Others as "unbearable" and to "look at things as if they could be otherwise," solutions accelerate the hardening paradigm.²⁰ These harsh measures find grounding in the US cultural narrative which recommends that if fear is present then the answer is to retaliate with force and to form strong defensive measures. To move away from aggression a different response is needed, one that does not strike back with violence assaulting the human spirit. A different story is required, for narratives shape how groups and individuals live in the world.²¹

AN ALTERNATIVE: A HUMANITARIAN PEACE NARRATIVE

The coarsening of schooling policies forms a moral position based on a larger cultural narrative,²² one that can be evaluated as immoral because of its aggressive and dehumanizing elements.²³ Scholars who raise objections to

¹⁸ Lopez, "NRA Board Member Ted Nugent."

¹⁹ Media Matters Staff, "NRA Board Member Ted Nugent Calls Parkland Students Poor, Pathetic Liars with No Soul," *Media Matters*, March 30, 2018, <https://www.mediamatters.org/video/2018/03/30/nra-board-member-ted-nugent-calls-parkland-students-poor-pathetic-liars-no-soul/219803>.

²⁰ Maxine Greene, *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1995), 5, 16.

²¹ Ivan Illich, Joseph Campbell, and many others have written about the power of story to human existence.

²² *Moral* is defined as the ways we consider and answer questions about how humans live together and act in the world. Peace scholars speak of war and peace as moral issues.

²³ Examples: predatory capitalism, massive incarcerations, prolonged military occupations and conflicts in the general culture, and zero tolerance policies and highly competitive testing cultures in schools.

aggressive policies know that pugnaciousness and violence, although extant for thousands of years, do not solve conflicts.²⁴ Causing misery in the short term, the use of hostile measures is also a long-term failure in that such actions bring about further violence.²⁵ The use of harsh policies to “improve safety” for schools is wrong-minded, will not work, does harm, and must be removed as the prevailing narrative of US culture and schools.

As peace advocate David Cortright notes, “While the dominant narrative has been and continues to be written in blood, a different, more hopeful story has emerged in the development of movements and ideas for peace.”²⁶ Peace narratives provide effective, morally positive, alternative visions for life and for schools, but ideas about how to beget a less violent existence are multifaceted—emanate from disparate scholars and individuals—which makes a unified vision difficult to articulate.²⁷ In the remainder of this essay, we draw on various peace scholars to articulate an alternative vision to the hardening narrative. Unlike the harsh solutions described above, such an alternative vision is open-ended and context specific. It is not prescriptive or a prepackaged standardized toolkit. Nor is it purely instrumental. This essay attempts to show possibilities for a more peaceful existence and interactions, and does so from a humanitarian moral stance.

Although prominent philosophers, such as Kant, have written about peace, few definitive philosophies of peace are extant.²⁸ Perhaps this lack of comprehensive peace philosophies results from how peace is defined.²⁹ In addition, peace policies must be implemented in a many-layered and connected way. That is, a more peaceful world must be built on a philosophy that involves an interdisciplinary approach that promotes change on many levels and on an ontological transformation, with an accompanying change in epistemology and pedagogy. The ontological shift must move away from rigid dualisms, slogans, aggression, individualism, materialism, and separation/othering, and toward an ontology featuring connection, love, compassion, empathy, diplomacy, and

²⁴ Diane Ravitch, Alfie Kohn, and Henry Giroux have written extensively in opposition to aggressive schooling policies.

²⁵ Charles P. Webel, “Thinking Peace,” in *Peace and Conflict Studies*, eds. Charles P. Webel and Jorgen Johansen (New York: Routledge, 2011), 71; Paul K. Chappelle, *The Cosmic Ocean: New Answers to Big Questions* (New York: Prospecta Press, 2015).

²⁶ David Cortright, “What is Peace?” in *Peace and Conflict Studies*, eds. Charles P. Webel and Jorgen Johansen (New York: Routledge, 2011), 130.

²⁷ Originally, we used the words “effective counter” instead of alternative vision. We changed the wording to move beyond the use of binaries, a component of the warrior narrative.

²⁸ Webel, “Thinking Peace,” 65.

²⁹ A comprehensive philosophy includes many vantage points instead of only one, such as Kant’s which is based upon laws and political entities.

nonviolence.³⁰ Epistemology must refrain from the current privileging of quantifiable knowledge over the arts and humanities, mainly promoted through pedagogy that separates learners from one another, especially through competition and fragmented learning, and move toward a more holistic, connected manner of thoughtfulness.³¹

In order to form a cohesive, morally-imaginative narrative,³² one devoted to changing the existing hardening paradigm, thought must be drawn from peace advocates representing a variety of academic disciplines ranging from theology and philosophy to the arts and sciences.³³ These changes must totally reframe or transform the warrior narrative; the addition of isolated practices, such as courses in mindfulness, while helpful, will not bring about the required new mindset. Essentially, peacemakers ask humans to claim their humane humanness.³⁴

William Graham Sumner, speaking of war and peace, presciently claimed in 1911, “what we prepare for is what we shall get.”³⁵ The twentieth century, filled with war and terrorism, bore out Sumner’s remark.³⁶ Peace, therefore, must be prepared for, basically through a lens of humanitarianism.³⁷ In the wider culture, this idea means changing systemic policies, such as those that privilege wealth, the bottom line, and big data sets over the comfort and security of individuals’ lived realities. Peace narratives oppose racism, sexism, and the patriarchy, all of which lead to inequality and conflict. The human quest for meaning and purpose requires acknowledgement, and the spiritual nature of being needs various means of fulfillment and expression. In addition,

³⁰ See the work of Professor Elizabeth Segal, *Social Empathy: The Art of Understanding Others* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

³¹ See Arthur Zajonc, “Spirituality in Higher Education: Overcoming the Divide,” *Liberal Education* 89, no.1 (2003): 50.

³² See Betty Reardon, *Comprehensive Peace Education: Education for Global Responsibility* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1988).

³³ Negative peace is the cessation of violence. Positive peace is a complete transformation of lived reality where systemic policies are in place to attend to problems before violence occurs. John Galtung, “Positive Peace and Negative Peace,” in *Peace and Conflict Studies*, eds. Charles P. Webel and Jorgen Johansen (New York: Routledge, 2012), 73–79.

³⁴ See Nel Noddings, “A Morally Defensible Mission for Schools in the 21st Century,” *Phi Delta Kappan* 76, no. 5 (1995): 365–368; Paul K. Chappelle, *Peaceful Revolution* (Westport: Easton Studio Press, 2012).

³⁵ William Graham Sumner, “War and Other Essays,” in *Approaches to Peace: A Reader in Peace Studies*, ed. David P. Barash (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 31–36.

³⁶ Conrad G. Brunk, “Shaping a Vision,” in *Peace and Conflict Studies*, eds. Charles P. Webel and Jorgen Johansen (New York: Routledge, 2012), 10.

³⁷ Dalai Lama, “A Human Approach to World Peace,” in *Approaches to Peace: A Reader in Peace Studies*, ed. David P. Barash (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 303–308.

humankind’s connection to the earth must be honored, with environmental problems acknowledged and ameliorated instead of abusing ecological systems.³⁸ In everyday life, moving away from the valuing of competition, testing, surveillance, harsh disciplinary measures, and the arming of civilians and teachers is an imperative change.

While peacemakers know that disagreements and conflicts are inevitable, they also know that these are not successfully solved with violent actions, policies, and threats; rather, nonviolent and life affirming ways can lessen these problems, but humanitarian ways must be present and valued in learning environments and in broader public culture for a more peaceful vision and resulting actions to occur.

Humans are conscious beings with intentionality; thinkers who ponder when making decisions and moral choices. Humans have souls and hearts, and peacemakers ask that these be used in deliberations and actions.³⁹ All of these matters have an ontological and epistemological bearing: they open questions related to the nature of knowledge and being in the world, and they resist the current narrow definition of knowledge and the harsh methods used for its acquisition.

The lived experience of individuals within cultures and the environments through which the young are brought into adult society are of ultimate significance to building a more peaceful world, where human connections and the public good are considered.⁴⁰ Hence, the remainder of this paper describes a few of the many elements needed to form a hospitable, nourishing environment for peace grounded in humanitarianism.

PEACE NOURISHING ENVIRONMENTS

Unlike the current hardening narrative that expects instant results, child development researchers note that humans must learn to be human through a fairly long process; therefore, child-rearing policies, epistemologies, and schooling practices are vital to the development of more peaceful individuals who would then compose a more pacific world. This notion of learning to be human becomes especially important if epigeneticists—who posit that genes can be turned on through learning activities or remain switched off—are correct.⁴¹ If that theory is accurate, awareness of this possibility is one to be taken seriously and acted upon ethically. Epigenetics emphasizes the importance of childhood conditions and young adult environments, especially if humans truly want to live together well and peaceably—given that schools,

³⁸ Bill McKibben, *The End of Nature* (New York: Random House, 2006).

³⁹ Thomas Merton, “Learning to Live,” in *Thomas Merton: Spiritual Master*, ed. Lawrence S. Cunningham (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 357–367.

⁴⁰ Elise Boulding, *Cultures of Peace: The Hidden Side of History* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000).

⁴¹ Keith Ward, “Redeeming Evil” (lecture, Christ Church College, Oxford, UK, August 7, 2017).

as environments shared by most young people in the US, provide a crucial site for learning how to live. As Hannah Arendt noted in her notion of natality, the ways in which the young are brought into adult society are crucial to the future, for the task is to set the environment so that the uniqueness of the newcomers will not be extinguished and the values of the existing adults will not be totally upended by the newness of the new ones.⁴² To give youth the type of education needed, there should be opportunities for them to not only learn about the past and the present but also to creatively imagine new opportunities for being in the future.

Therefore, a peace narrative requires a hospitable learning environment and an epistemology that is broad, nourishing, and respectful of differences, with its purpose being the offering of numerous possibilities to children and young people that will allow them to understand how they are connected to others and to the environments in which they live. Instead of having a mechanistic view of humans, a peace narrative recognizes them as sentient, intentional beings who are capable of caring, and who must think well and understand the many ways in which they learn, make choices, are connected to others, and contribute to the common good.⁴³

Currently, though, given the cultural and adult expectation for children to be mature, accountable, and “adult-like” producers, they are most often not given the time and environments in which to learn how to be caring creatures. Childhood as a period of latency where human and humane skills are learned, practiced, and reflected upon is currently truncated or abolished.⁴⁴ Most children have few opportunities to practice without consequences. They have few caring environments in which to be childlike, and even fewer opportunities for meaningful conversations with others where the big issues related to being human are discussed. Most students may be learning a narrow set of skills, but they are not being offered environments and opportunities in which to learn how to be compassionate, thoughtful, and whole human beings.

In peace-nurturing environments, several factors are present. One such practice is play, which provides a significant activity for learning how to be, how to be imaginative, and how to make choices. Choice-making should be emphasized in schools, not as an individualistic activity where the lone person is free to choose among many options.⁴⁵ Rather, choice-making should be understood as complex, involving risks, mistakes, corrections and most importantly other people. Humans are not “free agents” with individualistic rights to do as they please, no responsibilities to others, and no thought about historical context. Choice-making is a part of consciousness, and consciousness

⁴² Morten Timmermann Korsgaard and Mathias Mogensen Aldinger, “The Educator’s Diary: Arendt and Kierkegaard on Progressivism and the Educational Relation,” *Educational Theory* 68, no. 4–5 (2018): 519.

⁴³ Maxine Greene, *Dialectic of Freedom* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1988).

⁴⁴ Rowan Williams, *Lost Icons* (London: T & T Clark, 2000).

⁴⁵ Williams, *Lost Icons*.

is not particularly an individualistic matter. Therefore, much time should be dedicated daily in schools for deliberation about consciousness, choice, and the big moral questions of life.⁴⁶

Within the nourishing environment of such conversations, children are taught to pay attention to the many ways in which human beings “see” and know. For example, language carries thought out into the wider community and helps to structure action. In addition to the prevalence of “hate speech,” American English is filled with warlike terms, even when aggressive acts are not being considered. For example, individuals *target the answer, bomb tests, stamp out drugs, have a war on cancer, shoot down ideas, poke holes in arguments, and sweat bullets*. Words affect perception, enabling humans to see and to process what they see.⁴⁷ Current language encourages individuals to view their existences and interactions with others as a competitive, aggressive battle, contributing to the tenacity of the hardening narrative. Perhaps a change in vocabulary would open possibilities for other ways of seeing and knowing.

Peace nourishing environments should teach ideas of critique, giving young people ways in which to evaluate vocabulary, stories, and documents with which they engage. Discussions about the learning differences occasioned by print, artistic, and electronic media should form a vital aspect of study. Instead of noncritical acceptance of technology in its many forms, teachers should encourage research and discussion among students related to the problems of its use. That is, the why of and rationale for technology should outweigh its actual utilization. Electronic media cannot be discounted, but they need to be analyzed.

In addition, within a peace nourishing environment, time should be dedicated to attending to the inner life, including the nature of spirituality.⁴⁸ As Palmer and Zajonc note, transformative pedagogy addresses “the whole human being—mind, heart, spirit—in ways that contribute best to our future on this fragile planet.”⁴⁹ Students should study how emotions affect thoughts and actions, and learn to recognize their internal energizing force that propels their intentionality. Moreover, emotions should be distinguished from feelings and felt thought. Felt thought is an important way of knowing, as Susanne Langer advocates.⁵⁰ In a similar vein, spiritual scholar, Cynthia Bourgeault invites thinkers to look at the ancient definition of heart. Bourgeault states: “[the expression of] ‘putting the mind in the heart’ is not merely a quaint spiritual

⁴⁶ Clint Collins, “Wendell Berry on How Schools Reflect the Missing Community,” *Philosophic Studies in Education* 35 (2003): 121–127.

⁴⁷ Keith Ward, *The Big Questions in Science and Religion* (West Conshohocken: Templeton Press, 2008), 224.

⁴⁸ Angela Hurley, “A Yearning for Wholeness: Spirituality in Educational Philosophy,” *Philosophic Studies in Education* 43 (2012): 128–137.

⁴⁹ Parker Palmer, Arthur Zajonc, and Megan Scribner, *The Heart of Higher education: A Call to Renewal* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2010), 5.

⁵⁰ Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*.

metaphor but [it] contains precise and essential information on the physiological undergirding of conscious transformation.”⁵¹ Other scholars and neurobiologists note that the head and heart work together forming feedback loops; they are not isolated entities and figure into the learning process.⁵² Alexander Astin explains that the spiritual has to do with consciousness and that “our thoughts and our reasoning are almost always taking place in some kind of affective . . . context.”⁵³

The knowledge humans should learn and the process through which knowledge is acquired form vital questions for those seeking this change. Accountability, testing, AI, big data sets, surveillance technology, and algorithms, answer the knowledge question in a truncated, harsh, simplistic way; however, the wrong-mindedness of the current approach makes the knowledge question crucial if humans are to flourish, given that learning to be a caring and rational human being requires more than the environment schools currently offer.⁵⁴

Humans have many ways of knowing other than through scientific and mathematical thinking. Far from being frills, the arts and the humanities are a grounding for learning to be human, as they show human possibilities from many different vantage points and, in many cases, carry visions of what it means to be loving and compassionate. As poet and environmentalist Wendell Berry claims, it all turns on affection, and affection or love should thread throughout all schooling and knowledge-acquisition.⁵⁵ Art products also provide varying accounts related to conflicts, violence, and suffering.

Stories and the arts, then, form a valuable way of thinking and knowing and should be the essential core of schooling experiences. But learning involves more than including the stories and art products in that the experiences must include opportunities for students to dialogue with one another about those ways of seeing the human condition, for it is in the conversation that moral problems are identified, examined, and made a part of individual and collective consciousness.⁵⁶

In peace nourishing environments, the curriculum would be altered. For example, history would not be taught from the reference point of wars. The social history of workers, peacemakers, women, and other marginalized

⁵¹ Cynthia Bourgeault, *The Heart of Centering Prayer* (Boston: Shambhala Press, 2016), 61.

⁵² Rupert Sheldrake, *Scientific and Spiritual Practices* (Berkeley: Counterpoint Press, 2017).

⁵³ Alexander W. Astin, “Why Spirituality Deserves a Central Place in the Academy,” *Liberal Education* 90, no. 2 (2004): 37.

⁵⁴ Angela Hurley, “Measured for Measured,” *Philosophic Studies in Education* 46 (2015): 41–51.

⁵⁵ Wendell Berry, “It All Turns on Affection” (Jefferson lecture, Washington, DC, April 24, 2012).

⁵⁶ Greene, *Dialectic of Freedom*.

peoples would find preeminence. History would honestly reckon with violence perpetuated in the name of white supremacy and misogyny. Accounts of peacemaking and nonviolence would be emphasized. Nonviolence has a long history, but one that has largely been ignored.⁵⁷ Historically, numerous individuals have worked toward the peace vision suffering severe consequences, and should be included in the curriculum; yet, for the most part, they are not. Peacemakers have made a leap of faith, saying that peace is a supreme good, and they have committed to strive to actualize its possibility to the world. Their stories deserve consideration.

These are but a few examples of how nourishing environments might facilitate peaceful actions and change the hardening narrative that now dominates. Hopefully, scholarly policymakers will add to these ideas and rethink the story in which schools are now embedded. If peace notions become cohesive and an accepted narrative, the coarsened societal conditions and harsh schooling practices that the initial portion of this paper describes will be eroded, disrespected, and eliminated. The sign that this peaceful transformation has occurred will be apparent when compassionate, humanitarian people and actions are viewed as commonplace rather than as “other,” but such a transformation will require a combination of intellectual light and informed emotions for a holistic view of living that is inclusive of all and that abhors violent reactions to problems.

⁵⁷ Mark Kurlansky, *Nonviolence: The History of a Dangerous Idea* (New York: Random House, 2006).
